

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 TRSE-00 IO-13 CU-02 /085 W  
-----251747Z 110865 /47

R 251531Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6530  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 2850

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT SHUM TS  
SUBJECT: "LIBERALS" PLAN PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN IN EUROPE  
AND U.S.

REF: TUNIS 2590, TUNIS 2674

1. SUMMARY: TUNISIA'S "LIBERAL" OPPOSITION GROUP IS NOW  
UNDERTAKING A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN IN EUROPE AND THE U.S.  
TO OBTAIN SUPPORT FOR THEIR INITIATIVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
OBSERVANCE IN TUNISIA. "LIBERAL" LEADER HASSIB BEN AMMAR  
WILL CONDUCT CAMPAIGN AND WHILE IN U.S. HOPES TO GIVE PRESS  
CONFERENCE AND BE RECEIVED BY USG OFFICIALS. "LIBERAL"  
CAMPAIGN ARISES FROM CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE  
IN TUNISIA BUT IS PRIMARILY TACTIC IN "LIBERAL" CAMPAIGN  
TO WIN STATUS FOR THEMSELVES IN TUNISIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM.  
WE RECOMMEND THAT BEN AMMAR BE RECEIVED AT LEVEL OF TUNISIA  
DESK OFFICER IF HE SEEKS MEETINGS WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS  
IN WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY.

2. THE AUTHORS OF THE TRACT DESCRIBED IN TUNIS 2590  
ARE NOW COMPLETING PLANS FOR PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE  
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AND U.S. TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR THEIR PROPOSED CONFERENCE  
ON HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE. "LIBERAL" LEADER HASSIB  
BEN AMMAR (A FORMER GOT DEFENSE MINISTER) TOLD EMBASSY  
OFFICER THAT HE WILL LEAVE APRIL 26 OR 27 FOR GENEVA,  
PARIS AND LONDON WHERE HE EXPECTS TO CONTACT AFFILIATES  
OF LEAGUE FOR RIGHTS OF MAN AND PLANS TO BE IN U.S.  
FROM MAY 8 TO 15. HE EXPECTS TO GIVE PRESS CONFERENCE

IN WASHINGTON AND HOPES THAT HIS VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE IN TUNISIA WILL COME TO ATTENTION OF HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS IN USG.

3. BEN AMMAR IS LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR PARIS SEGMENT OF HIS CAMPAIGN WITH JEUNE AFRIQUE DIRECTOR BECHIR BEN YAHMED AND WITH HABIB BOULARES, A WRITER FOR JEUNE AFRIQUE AND FORMER GOT MINISTER OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION. FOR U.S. SEGMENT OF CAMPAIGN BEN AMMAR HAS HAD ADVICE OF ABED BOUHAFI WHO REPRESENTED THE TUNISIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN THE U.S. BEFORE 1956. BOUHAFI HAS, ACCORDING TO BEN AMMAR, SUGGESTED CONTACTS WITH PETER LISAGOR AND WARD OF BALTIMORE SUN, AMONG OTHERS.

4. DURING UNDER SECRETARY HABIB'S VISIT TO TUNIS, "LIBERALS" INDICATED TO US THAT BEN AMMAR HOPES TO SEE THE UNDER SECRETARY IN WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE IN TUNISIA AND THE NEED FOR POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION.

5. EVER SINCE THEY WERE EXCLUDED FROM POWER BY PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1971 DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS, THE "LIBERALS" HAVE SOUGHT UNSUCCESSFULLY TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THEIR CAUSE AND SECURE POLITICAL STATUS FOR THEMSELVES IN TUNISIA. THEY BELIEVE THEY WERE VICTORIOUS AT THE 1971 PARTY CONGRESS AND THAT THE PROGRAM OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION HAD THE LEGITIMACY OF BOTH POPULAR SUPPORT AND THE BACKING OF BOURGUIBA. IF THE PRESIDENT EVER APPROVED OF THE LIBERALIZATION  
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PROGRAM, HOWEVER, HE CERTAINLY CHANGED HIS MIND AND WITHDREW WHATEVER SUPPORT HE HAD GIVEN THE PRINCIPAL "LIBERAL" FIGURES (AHMED MISTIRI, BEJI CAID ESSEBSI, HASSIB EN AMMAR AND OTHERS). DURING THE 1974 PSD CONGRESS, THE "LIBERALS" WERE EXPELLED FROM THE PARTY FOR FAILING TO ACCEPT DISCIPLINE.

6. "LIBERAL" EFFORTS TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THEIR CAUSE AND SECURE POLITICAL STATUS FOR THEMSELVES WITHIN THE SYSTEM HAVE CONSISTED OF ADDRESSING APPEALS TO BOURGUIBA TO ACCEPT THE PROGRAM OF THE 1971 PARTY CONGRESS, CIRCULATING TRACTS IN TUNISIA CALLING FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR PROGRAM AND LAMENTING THE "DETERIORATION" OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY. OVER THE PAST YEAR, THEY BEGAN SEEKING TO FORM A "LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN" AND TO PUBLISH A NEWSPAPER. THE GOT HAS TOLERATED THE CIRCULATION OF TRACTS AND HAS BLOCKED (ALTHOUGH NOT YET OFFICIALLY DISAPPROVED) THE NEWSPAPER. IT APPEARS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL, HOWEVER, ALLOW THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "LEAGUE

FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN" BUT IT IS NOT YET CLEAR UNDER WHAT TERMS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 2850

7. THE "LIBERALS" CREDENTIALS AS SUPPORTERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARE REASONABLY GOOD. THEIR POLITICAL PROGRAM PASSED AT THE 1971 PARTY CONGRESS DID PROVIDE FOR A LIBERALIZATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT WOULD HAVE MADE TUNISIA MORE OPEN THAN IT NOW IS TO DISSENTING VIEWS. SINCE THE GOT BEGAN STATE SECURITY COURT TRIALS OF RADICAL STUDENT ACTIVISTS, LAWYERS BELONGING TO THE "LIBERAL" GROUP HAVE PROVIDED LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE ACCUSED (WITHOUT CHARGE IN MOST CASES) ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE NO SYMPATHY FOR THE RADICALS' IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS. NONETHELESS, THE "LIBERALS" ESPOUSAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS LARGELY A TACTIC IN THEIR STRUGGLE TO GET POLITICAL STATUS FOR THEMSELVES.

8. AS WE HAVE NOTED IN NUMEROUS POLITICAL REPORTS SINCE 1971, THE "LIBERALS" ARE FOR THE MOST PART UPPER MIDDLE CLASS PROFESSIONALS BASED IN TUNIS. SOME OF THEM HAVE CLOSE FAMILY CONNECTIONS THROUGH MME. WASSILA BOURGUIBA AND HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR., WITH THE PRESIDENT. THE "LIBERALS" ARE THE DOMINANT POLITICAL FACTION IN TUNIS AND PROBABLY ENJOY WIDE POPULAR SUPPORT IN THE CAPITAL. THEY NOW CLAIM THAT THEIR TRACT CALLING FOR A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE OVER 500 SIGNATURES, AND THESE SIGNERS ARE  
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PROBABLY MOSTLY FROM TUNIS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF MIDDLE CLASS VIEWS. THEY MAY ENJOY SUPPORT ELSEWHERE IN TUNISIA BUT THEY CERTAINLY DO NOT YET COMPETE POLITICALLY WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND HIS SAHELIAN CLANS.

9. IF BEN AMMAR CARRIES THROUGH WITH HIS PLANS FOR A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN IN THE U.S. AND IF HE SEEKS AN APPOINTMENT WITH STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS, WE RECOMMEND THAT HE BE RECEIVED AT THE LEVEL OF THE TUNISIA DESK OFFICER. WE HAVE HAD PERIODIC CONTACT WITH BEN AMMAR AND OTHER "LIBERAL" FIGURES (SEE VARIOUS MEMCONS) AND HAVE LISTENED TO THEIR VIEWS. WHEN THEY HAVE ASKED WHAT U.S. POLICY IS TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS, WE HAVE CITED OFFICIAL USG POLICY STATEMENTS FAVORING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS BUT WE HAVE NOT DRAWN SPECIFIC PARALLELS BETWEEN THESE POLICIES AND THE SITUATION IN TUNISIA. WE HAVE ALSO POINTED OUT TO THEM OUR GENERAL INTERESTS IN TUNISIA, PRIMARILY SUPPORT FOR ITS SOVEREIGNTY, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE.

10. WE HAVE NOTED AN EVOLUTION IN "LIBERAL" THINKING OVER THE POST YEAR TOWARD AN INCREASE IN WILLINGNESS TO PRESSURE THE GOT FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR STATUS AS AN OPPOSITION GROUP. THIS CHANGE IN TACTICS HAS BEEN SHOWN IN MOVE TO FORM "LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN" AND ATTEMPT TO PUBLISH A NEWSPAPER. THE GOT HAS EASILY DEFLECTED THESE "LIBERAL" INITIATIVES. OVER THE PAST FOUR MONTHS, HOWEVER, THE "LIBERALS" HAVE FELT EMBOLDENED AND ARE STEPPING UP PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT, USING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AS THEIR MAIN WEAPON WITH THE HOPE OF MOBILIZING PUBLIC OPINION AND OFFICIAL ACTION IN THE TWO COUNTRIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO TUNISIA; I.E. FRANCE AND THE U.S. WE SUSPECT THAT THE "LIBERALS" IMAGINE THAT THEIR BATTLE FOR POLITICAL STATUS CAN BE WON IN THIS WAY.

11. OUR PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE IN DEALING WITH THE "LIBERALS" SHOULD BE TO INDICATE AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF SYMPATHY  
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FOR THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITHOUT BEING MADE TO APPEAR TO BE SUPPORTING THE "LIBERALS" POLITICAL CAUSE AND THUS INTERFERING IN TUNISIA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS OBJECTIVE CAN BE ACHIEVED BY LISTENING TO THE "LIBERALS" WITHOUT COMMITTING OURSELVES TO MAKING JUDGMENTS ON THE TUNISIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ITS OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS THAT GOES BEYOND STATEMENTS MADE IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT TO CONGRESS. THE GOT HAS TOLERATED OUR LEVEL OF CONTACTS WITH THE "LIBERALS"

IN TUNIS AND WE BELIEVE THAT IF BEN AMMAR IS RECEIVED BY  
THE TUNISIA DESK OFFICER THE GOVERNMENT WILL PLACE THIS  
MEETING IN THE SAME CONTEXT.  
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## Message Attributes

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